

A Guide To Waste Reduction and Recycling



Around The House

Washington State
Department of Ecology
Solid Waste and Financial
Assistance Program

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Why Recycle?

Recycling helps the environment by:

- | conserving natural resources and energy
- | saving landfill space
- | preventing pollution of our air and water.

It's easy to do, and it can save you money! Washingtonians recycle hundreds of thousands of tons of material every year; we are some of the best recyclers in the nation. In 1992, over 113,000 people called the state Department of Ecology's Waste Reduction and Recycling Office toll-free to find out more about reducing waste and recycling. There are recycling centers all across Washington state, and citizens in many communities can have their recyclables picked up at the curb. If your community doesn't have curbside service, you and your neighbors can save time and gas by taking turns bringing your families' materials to the recycling center.

Maybe you think recycling is inconvenient or takes too much time. But it takes most families about one hour per month, or 2 minutes a day to recycle their glass, cans, and newspaper. And recyclers can take pride in knowing they are doing their part to care for the environment.

Better Yet – Reduce Waste

Recycling helps deal with some types of waste. But it takes energy to recycle, and not all of the waste we generate can be recycled. The best way to handle the problem of garbage is not to create so much in the first place! Here are some tips for keeping stuff out of the garbage can and the landfill.

Avoid Excess Packaging

The cost of the package is included in the price of each product, so you *are* paying for it. Look for the product with the least packaging, or you're just throwing money away! You can also reduce waste by bringing your own bags, jars, or containers when you go shopping, so you can buy in bulk whenever possible.

Use Durable Products

Bring a shopping bag with you to tote your groceries home; keep a coffee cup in your car so you won't have to throw away a take-out cup. Cloth diapers, towels, and napkins are less expensive to use than disposable ones, and you don't have to throw them away. Look for high-quality goods that are made to last a long time. They may cost you a little more now but they'll save you money and protect the environment in the long run.



Share What You Can

Some items, like tools, sports equipment, and party supplies, could be shared among you and your family, friends, and neighbors or rented for special occasions. If you have items you don't need, donate them to a charity or give them to a friend. Shop at yard sales and second-hand stores for furniture, appliances and other items.

Reuse, Repair, Restore

Try to make the things you own last. Instead of buying new, repair the old. The Yellow Pages lists repair services. Find new uses for items you might otherwise throw away. Make it a personal goal to keep as much as possible out of the garbage can!

Kick the Junk Mail Habit

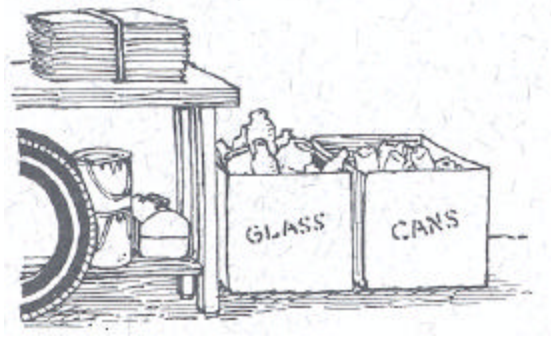
To reduce the amount of unsolicited mail you receive, write the Mail Preference Service at:

Direct Marketing Association
Mail Preference Services
P.O. Box 9008
Farmingdale, NY 11735

Ask them to remove your name and address from the mailing lists they handle. And call the Waste Reduction and Recycling Information office for other suggestions about stemming the flood of junk mail.

Recycling Space

Reserve some space at home and at work for recycling – maybe under the sink, or in a corner of the break room. Your recycling area can be as simple as a few cardboard boxes, one each for the different kinds of materials you recycle: glass, aluminum, metal, and paper. Or you can design your home to include built-in recycling bins. Call the Waste Reduction and Recycling Information Office for suggestions about designing recycling into your home.



Buy Recycled and Recyclable Products

When you purchase products made from recycled materials, you help close the recycling loop. Some products are labeled “*Made from recycled material.*” Look for aluminum cans or glass bottles, or recycled paperboard containers, which are usually grey or brown on the inside. Retreaded tires, re-refined motor oil, certain paper products, and cardboard egg cartons are other examples of recycled products. By purchasing items in recyclable containers, you ensure that you won’t have to discard their packages. Avoid multi-material packages, like disposable juice packs, that can’t be reused or recycled easily.

Paper

Recyclers classify paper into various grades. Most paper can be recycled, but check with the Waste Reduction and Recycling Information Office to find out what types you can recycle in your community, and how to sort them. Cardboard, office paper, and mixed scrap paper (including junk mail) are some of the grades that can be recycled fairly easily. In some areas, even magazines are recyclable! Coated paper, like paper cups and milk cartons, are not so easy to recycle.

The easiest kind of paper to recycle is newsprint. Just stack the daily papers in a corner, safe from heat or flame. Tie the stack into a bundle when it is about 1 foot high (approximately 30 pounds). Or simply store the papers in a paper grocery bag, and recycle the bag along with the newspapers. If you are participating in a curbside program, follow the instructions your collector provides.



Recycled paper can be made into all kinds of things: new paper, insulation, packing materials, flower pots, egg cartons, livestock bedding, cereal boxes, and building materials. When you

purchase recycled paper products, you help close the recycling loop to conserve natural resources.

Plastic

Plastic may not weigh much, but it takes up lots of space in landfills. And because it's strong and durable, it doesn't break down. Plastics are good materials for items that you want to keep for a long, long time, but not so great for things you throw away. Try to find a new use for empty plastic containers: milk jugs make excellent miniature greenhouses, margarine tubs can hold leftovers, and squeeze bottles can be refilled with shampoo or condiments.

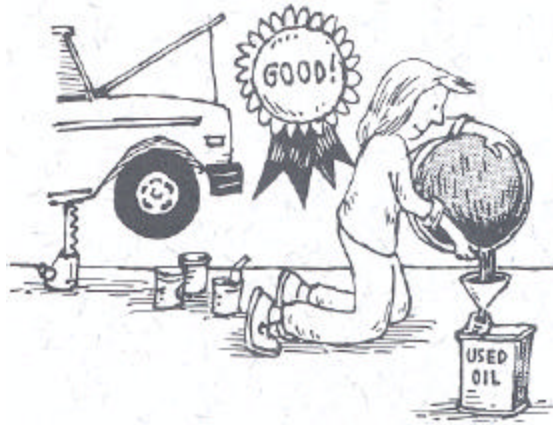
Some plastic containers can be recycled in some communities. Call the Waste Reduction and Recycling Information Office to find out if a recycling center near you can take soft drink bottles, shampoo bottles, milk jugs, and other plastics. Plastics recyclers can make building materials, toys, luggage, clothing, flowerpots, and a variety of other things out of recycled plastic.

Automotive Products

Your car produces garbage, too! Used motor oil, antifreeze, old tires, and batteries can all harm the environment if they are disposed of improperly, by polluting the air and water that people and wildlife depend on. Oil kills fish and shellfish; antifreeze tastes sweet to dogs, cats, and other mammals, but it poisons them. Tires can catch fire and cause toxic fumes, and batteries release lead and acid into our water systems.



You can reduce the amount of waste your car generates simply by driving less! Try leaving your car at home one day a week, for starters. Ride a bike, walk, carpool, or take public transportation instead. And be sure to recycle the oil, antifreeze, tires, and batteries; the Waste Reduction and Recycling Information Office can tell you how. When you drain your crankcase, put the used oil into a sealed container, such as a gallon milk jug. Don't mix the oil with anything else! See the section on household hazardous waste to find out how to handle other substances, like engine degreasers and solvents, that would contaminate the oil and make it unrecyclable.



Carry antifreeze in a separate, sealed container. Handle batteries carefully to avoid getting acid on skin or clothing. The Waste Reduction and Recycling Information Office can send you more information on automotive wastes, and can tell you where and how to recycle them.

Glass

There are lots of ways to re-use a pickle jar, jelly glass, juice bottle, or wine jug. Fill them with nuts and bolts, use them for canning, make them into drinking glasses, or create a terrarium. If you still have glass left over, recycle it! Wash the containers and take off the metal caps and rings. Don't break them. Most recycling centers have separate bins marked for brown, green, and clear glass and you can sort your glass by color when you get there.

Some types of bottles are designed to be refilled, especially certain brands of beer bottles. (The Waste Reduction and Recycling Information Office can tell you which brands are refillable.) These are worth more money at recycling centers than other kinds of glass. Wash them out and keep the different brands separate. You can bring them back in the case you bought them in, or in any bag or box.

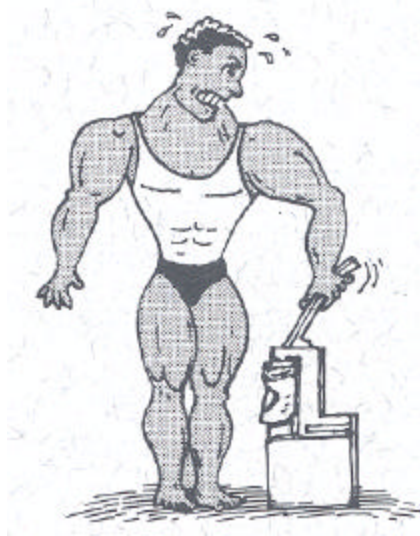


What happens to the glass you recycle? Refillable bottles are sterilized and filled with new beer or soda pop. Most other glass is broken down into small pieces called cullet, which is melted and re-made into new containers. Cullet is a crucial ingredient in all glass manufacturing.

Cans and Other Metal Materials

There are three kinds of recyclable cans, and you can call the Waste Reduction and Recycling Information Office to find out where to take each kind.

Aluminum beverage cans are worth money. It takes 20 times as much energy to make an aluminum can from raw bauxite ore as it does to make one by melting down used cans! So recyclers are eager to buy your cans back. You can determine which cans are aluminum: they are brightly shiny and don't stick to a magnet. Most have "*Recycle Me*" stamped on them. Just rinse them out and bring them in.



You can crush them if you want to – they'll take up less space that way.

Tinned food cans are recyclable, too. They look silver or grey on the outside and yellow or gold on the inside. Wash the can out and remove the paper label. To save space, you can take off both ends and flatten the can. When these cans are recycled, the 1% tin in them is removed from the 99% steel they are made of. Both the tin and the steel are made into new products.

A few cans, called bi-metal cans, look like aluminum cans but are made partly of steel. To check, look at the bottom. An aluminum can has a shiny bottom, but a bi-metal can's bottom looks dull, and a magnet will stick to it. Not all recyclers will take bi-metal cans. You can also recycle scrap metal from around your home. Aluminum pie plates and foil, lawn chairs, ladders, and screen doors can be recycled. So can copper wire, pipe, sheet metal, appliances, lawn mowers, and car parts. Call the Waste Reduction and Recycling Information Office to find out exactly what you can recycle and where to take it.



Household Hazardous Waste

If you never thought of your home as a hazardous waste site, just check under your sink and in your garage. Disinfectants, degreasers, pesticides, paints, toilet cleaners, turpentine, motor oil, and many hobby products can be toxic to you, your family, and the environment, unless they are used and discarded carefully.

If these products go out with your other garbage, they will end up in a landfill where they can leak out into the water supply. Washed down the sink, they can damage septic systems or pass directly through sewage treatment plants into streams, lakes, and bays. Pouring them down the storm drain just sends them untreated into the nearest waterway or groundwater aquifer.

By following a few simple guidelines, you can reduce the amount of hazardous materials you need to buy, and help protect the environment from household hazardous waste.

- | Use nontoxic or less toxic products whenever possible. The Information Office can suggest alternatives to hazardous product you may be using now.
- | Plan ahead. Buy only as much of a hazardous product as you need, so there will be none to dispose of.
- | Use up all of the product, or give the surplus to someone else who can make good use of it. (Don't give away hazardous products unless they have the original labels and are in sound, leak-proof containers. Do not share banned chemicals such as DDT or Pentachloroophenol.)

If you still have hazardous substances to dispose of, call the Waste Reduction and Recycling Information Office to find out where and when you can take them to a hazardous waste collection point. Trained staff there will ensure that your wastes do not contaminate the environment.



Yard Waste

Yard waste isn't really waste at all – it's a valuable resource you can put to work in your own backyard. The Waste Reduction and Recycling Information Office can send you some tips to get you started turning grass clippings, leaves, and weeds into a rich soil conditioner called compost. Composting can be as easy as leaving your grass clippings on your lawn: they act as fertilizer. We can even tell you how to start a "worm bin" to help you turn food scraps into fertilizer for your house or yard plants.

If you don't care to compost, some communities offer a service for collecting yard waste. They use it in large, municipal composting systems to make soil amendments or mulches for lots of uses. If you're lucky, a processor in your area may have some available for you to purchase. Many towns and counties collect Christmas trees, too, in early January. Call 1-800-RECYCLE to find out more.

Conclusion: (A Final Note)

In the Northwest, we care about the environment and the quality of life. When it comes right down to it, recycling and waste reduction are the easiest and most effective ways for every family to cut down on the stream of waste that threatens Washington's environment.

For More Information

For information on waste reduction, recycling, composting or household hazardous waste contact your city or county government or call Department of Ecology's Waste Reduction and Recycling Information Office at 1-800-RECYCLE.